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The
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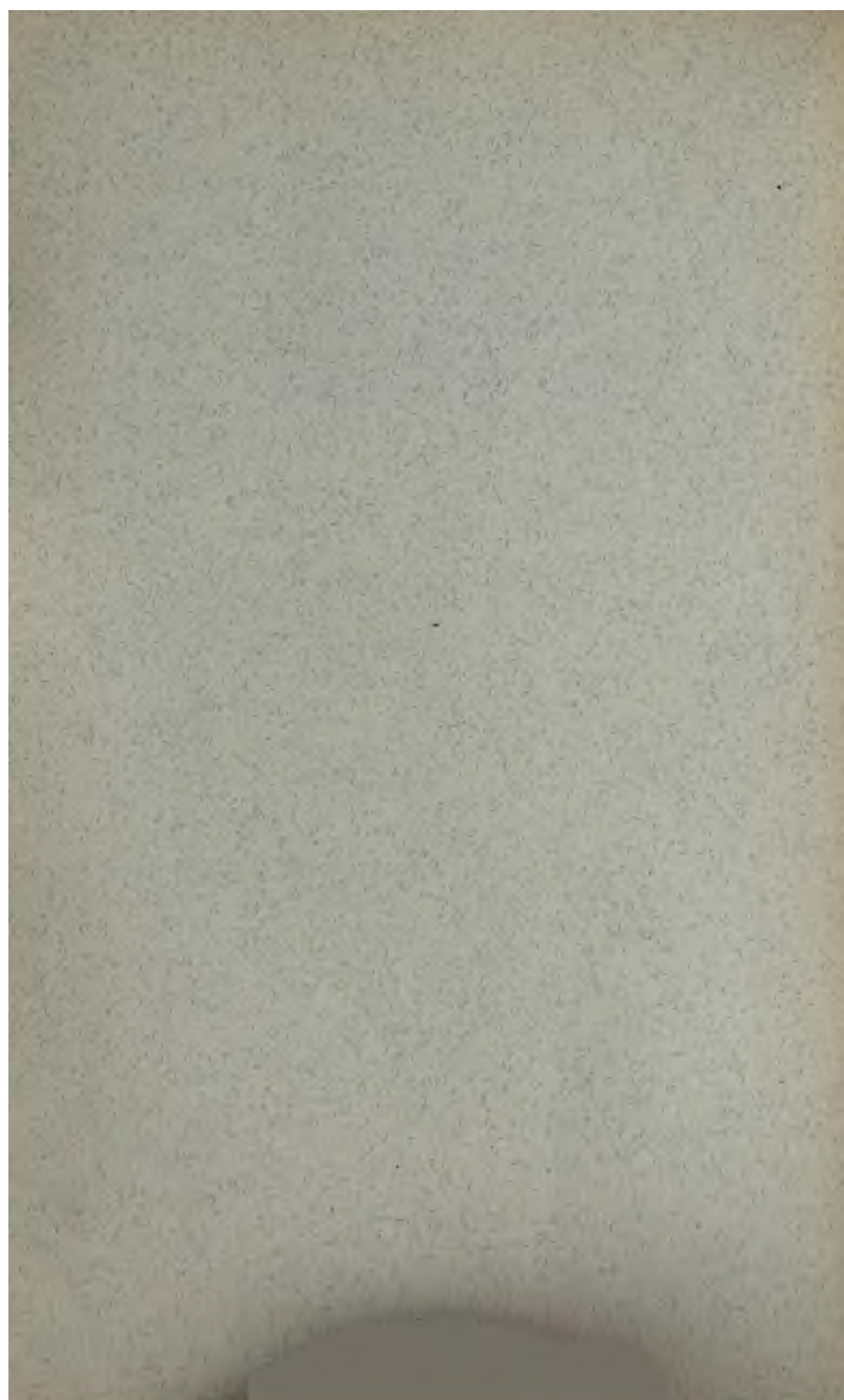
by

Dr. Paul Trommsdorff,

ASSISTANT AT THE BERLIN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

TRANSLATED BY ADELAIDE S. LAUPRECHT,
AND THE
TRANSLATION REVISED BY A. CAPEL SHAW.

Birmingham
Percival Jones Limited
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XXIV. Extra Number to the Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen.

Birmingham :
Percival Jones Limited,
1900.

B 8682.1.40



See Librarian

Authorities.

1. Literary :

Borough of Birmingham. Proceedings of the Council, 1862-1899. Birmingham, 1862-1899.

City of Birmingham. Annual Report of the Free Libraries Committee, 1-37. Birmingham, 1862-1899.

Cuttings, etc. on the Birmingham Free Libraries, two folio volumes in the Birmingham Reference Library, with newspaper cuttings and other printed matter referring to the Libraries.

The Birmingham Free Libraries, the Shakespeare Memorial Library and the Art Gallery, by John Alfred Langford. Birmingham, 1871 (6d.).

History of the Corporation of Birmingham, by John Thackray Bunce, Vol. II. Birmingham, 1885, pp. 206-236.

The Free Library, its History and Present Condition, by John J. Ogle (The Library Series, I.). London, 1897, pp. 173-182, a good general review of the development of the Libraries.¹

2. Personal observations made by the author in July and August, 1899, and communications by the Administration. Great thanks are due to the Chief Librarian, Mr. A. Capel Shaw, and to Mr. J. Lloyd Williams, Senior Assistant in the Reference Library, for the full and exact information given by them.

1. [POSTSCRIPT OF THE AUTHOR]. This pamphlet had already been published, when I learned by the "Bericht über die Verwaltung der städtischen Volksbibliotheken und Lesehallen zu Berlin" = Verwaltungs-Bericht des Magistrats zu Berlin für die Zeit vom 1. April 1898 bis 31. März 1899 Nr. 11, an extract whereof is to be found in the "Blätter für Volksbibliotheken und Lesehallen," I. 1900, pp. 124-130, that the late Prof. Fr. A. Leo, of Berlin, published in August, 1896, at his expense, a pamphlet concerning the Birmingham Free Libraries under the title "Volksbibliotheken in England," which I could not get from any library or bookseller.

THE BIRMINGHAM FREE LIBRARIES.

AMONG all the great towns of England in which the institution of Public Libraries has attained great prosperity, the Metropolis of the Midlands, the City of Birmingham, takes a pre-eminent place. Thomas Greenwood, a good judge on public libraries in England, is quite right in saying in his well-known work concerning them¹: "To any one unacquainted with the Public Libraries of the country, a visit to the Birmingham Public Libraries is a liberal education . . . Their ever-extending work is the best of all possible proofs of the utility of the Libraries." On February 21st, 1860, the law of 1855 concerning Public Libraries was adopted in Birmingham, and on April 3rd, 1861, the first Library was opened. The development has been, and is, continuous. The City now possesses eleven libraries, viz.: the Reference Library, the Central Lending Library and News Room, and nine Branch Libraries and News Rooms. On March 31st, 1899, they contained in all 242,218 volumes.²

The general direction of these Libraries is entrusted to the Free Libraries Committee.³ This Committee, chosen anew every year, consists of nine members of the City Council, among whom is the Lord Mayor, and six non-Councillors. Two Sub-Committees, consisting generally of eight members, are appointed for dealing with the various work of the Libraries, viz.: a Book Sub-Committee, to purchase the books for the Reference Library, and a Management Sub-Committee, to whom is entrusted the general control of the Libraries. The Management Sub-Committee in turn has two Sub-Committees, viz.: a Finance Sub-Committee, which checks and recommends for payment all the accounts, and a Lending Libraries Book Sub-Committee, which considers all proposals of books for the Lending Libraries, and recommends their purchase. There is also a Visiting Committee, consisting of two members taken in turn from the Free Libraries Committee, whose duty it is to visit all the Libraries once a month. The Chairman of the Free Libraries Committee is *ex-officio* a member of all the Sub-Committees. Other Sub-Committees are appointed from time to time as required, for example: a Lecture Sub-Committee in 1887, and during the construction of the new

1. Public Libraries. 4th Ed. (London, Paris & Melbourne, 1894), p. 155.

2. In this pamphlet the word *volumes* implies, not bookbinders' volumes, but rather bibliographic volumes, likewise single charts, maps, photographs, and such like contained therein.

3. City of Birmingham. Council and Committees, Standing Orders and Bye-Laws, 1897-1898 (Birmingham, 1898) p. 124.

Libraries a Sites and Buildings Sub-Committee was found necessary. The Free Libraries Committee hold a sitting on the first Monday in every month, at the Council House. The Sub-Committees meet once a month on some date before the meeting of the Free Libraries Committee, at the Reference Library. At these Sub-Committees, all proposals concerning the acquisition of books, and all that relates to the administration and management of the Libraries, are considered, and reports prepared for presentation to the Free Libraries Committee. The Free Libraries Committee from time to time submits a report of its work to the City Council to be confirmed. Permission of the Council has also to be obtained for larger expenditure, especially for the borrowing of capital for the purpose of new buildings, enlargements, or furnishing, etc., of interior. The Committee renders an account to the general public by an extensive and detailed annual report. The latest report, for the year April 1st, 1898, to March 31st, 1899, consists of 65 pages, and gives by its statistics a clear and distinct view of the administration and of the use made of these Libraries.¹

For carrying on the work of the Libraries a large staff of officials is required.² The staff is composed of a Chief Librarian, who is responsible for the control and direction of all the Libraries, a Sub-Librarian, an Inspector of the Lending Libraries and News Rooms, 10 Librarians of the Lending Libraries, and 54 Assistants. The latter are divided into Seniors above 21 years old, of whom there are at present 20, and Junior Assistants, 14 to 21 years old.³ In addition there are five Jewish Assistants who take duty in the Reference Library on Sundays. At the Central Libraries there are also three Porters, one being resident; and in addition 20 cleaners, chiefly women, are required for the various Libraries. John D. Mullins was Chief Librarian from May 30th, 1865, till June 30th, 1898, and to his zeal, capacity, and knowledge of literature, the Libraries owe much of their magnificent development. His successor, who until then had been Sub-Librarian, is the present Chief Librarian, A. Capel Shaw.

Boys, who are expected to have had a good school education, are taken as Assistants when about 14 years old. The administration takes care for their thorough practical improvement, by instructing them in all the branches of the work. They thus attain to great dexterity in the discharge of all the duties of their office, and probably most of them independently acquire more than an external acquaintance with books. From time to time the Committee, by one of its members, causes to be held an examination concerning the management of a library, history, bibliography, and literature. In the last of these examinations, the knowledge of the Assistants as to their technical work was found to be good, but their general education was not quite

1. See also the 38th annual report, for the year April 1st, 1899, to March 31st, 1900.
2. Birmingham Free Libraries. Report of Sub-Committee on Library Staff (Proceedings of the Council, 13th July, 1883, Minute 13,155).
3. There is about one official to each 3,500 volumes. Among the Librarians there is one lady, and four among the Assistants.

so good as desirable.¹ However, the Librarians of the Lending Libraries and the older Assistants give the impression of persons who are fully educated for their office, and who do their work well.²

The weekly hours of service for the officials are 48. They are so distributed that each official on one day goes off at 6 p.m., and on another day at 1 p.m. The holidays granted by the Committee are : Seniors 12 working days, Sub-Seniors 8 days, Juniors 7 days, and in addition the four Bank Holidays, Christmas Day, and Good Friday.

The salaries are good.³ Mr. Mullins received since 1884 as Chief Librarian £500 per annum. Mr Shaw as Sub-Librarian had at the last £325, and now receives £500. The Librarians of the Branch Libraries receive from 30s. to 50s. per week, Senior Assistants from 25s. to 30s., and Juniors in all the Libraries, from their first day of entrance at 14 years of age, 6s., then each year up to the age of 21, 2s. per week more. The sum total of the salaries paid in the year ending March 31st, 1899, was £4,980 13s. 6d. Concerning pensions, the following principles came into existence 1st April, 1898.⁴ A pension may be claimed after 20 years' service if the official is an invalid, or at the age of 65. The officials who receive 40s. or more per week, receive after 20 years $\frac{2}{3}$ of their salary as a pension, with a rise of $\frac{1}{10}$ each year till it reaches the maximum of $\frac{4}{5}$ after 40 years. Under special circumstances 10 years may be added to the length of service. The condition, however, for obtaining this pension is that the officials up to a service of 40 years contribute 3% of their salary. In the event of the retirement or death of an official before reaching superannuation age, the amount of his previous contributions are paid to him, or his representatives, without interest. Officials receiving less than 40s. per week can, under certain conditions, receive pensions as follows : after 20 years' service 7s. per week, after 30 years' service 8s. 6d. per week, after 40 years' service 10s. per week.

The sums spent on the administration of the Public Libraries are considerable. The rate of 1d. in the pound, which was the limit according to the law of 1855, proved too small for carrying out the purpose aimed at, and complaints of the insufficiency of the sum thus obtained appear already in the reports of 1870 and onwards. In 1883, however, the limit was removed by a special clause in the Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act of that year.⁵ The method adopted is as follows. Towards the close of the financial year, the Free Libraries Committee prepare an estimate of the amount required for the following year, which is forwarded to the Finance Department for incorporation

1. Proceedings of the Council, 5th April, 1898, Minute 17,554.
The officials, who are members of the Birmingham and District Library Association, have plentiful opportunity of enriching and enlarging their knowledge at their meetings, when libraries and interesting technical methods are inspected, and papers on library matters are read.
3. Proceedings of the Council, 17th Mar., 1896, Minute 16,986.
4. Birmingham Corporation Superannuation Scheme (Proceedings of the Council, 7th Dec., 1897, Minute 17,454).
5. The Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act, 1883, by E. O. Smith and C. A. Carter. Birmingham, 1883, sec. 87.

in the general amount required for the City, and the rate levied accordingly. In 1884 the amount levied for Free Library purposes was 1·23d.; 1885: 1·41d.; 1886: 1·29d.; 1887: 1·24d.; 1888: 1·27d.; 1889: 1·29d.; 1890/91: 1·31d.; 1891/92: 1·37d.; 1892/93: 1·41d.; 1893/94: 1·50d.; 1894/95: 1·50d.; 1895/96: 1·60d.; 1896/97: 1·46d.; 1897/98: 1·58d.; and 1898/99: 1·48d. Thus on an average during the first five years since the removal of the limit, the rate amounted to 1·29d., for the next five years 1·38d., and for the last five years 1·52d., in the pound. In 1898/99 the amount received from the rate was £14,197 0s. 10d. The amount received from fines, sale of catalogues, newspapers, etc., was £1,210 6s. 9d. Besides the sum derived from the rate, there is a sum of about £5,000, the balance of a fund of about £15,000, which was given by the public in 1879 for the purpose of restoring the Reference Library, which had been destroyed by fire. The accumulated interest of this fund increased the means at the disposal of the Free Libraries Committee last year by £664 3s. 11d. The total income for the year 1898/99 thus amounted to £16,071 11s. 6d. There are also considerable donations of books. In the year 1898/99 the Libraries received in this way 1,680 volumes, *i.e.*, 18% of their total increase.

The expenditure for the year 1898-99 amounted to £17,086 10s. 3d., hence overstepping the income by £1,014 8s. 9d.¹ Of that amount £947 were for general purposes = 6%; for the Central Libraries, including the Reference and Central Lending Libraries, £9,040 = 53%; and for the Branch Libraries £7,099, or 42%. The amounts for the various heads of expenditure were as follows: salaries, wages, and superannuation allowances, £5,186 = 30%; interest on and repayment of loans, rent and taxes, £4,777 = 28%; books and newspapers, £2,647 = 15%; furniture and repairs, £1,791 = 11%; coal, gas, and water, £1,405 = 8%; bookbinding, £716 = 5%. The remaining sum of £561 was spent in insurance, printing and stationery, postage, etc.

* * *

The Central Libraries are naturally the largest and most important.² By these we understand the two principal Libraries, *viz.*: the Reference Library and Reading Room, and the Central Lending Library and News Room, all in one and the same building. The building is situated in the western centre of the city, at the corner of Ratcliff Place and Edmund Street, the entrance being in Ratcliff Place. It was built here in place of the Library destroyed by fire³ on January 11th, 1879. It is in Renaissance style, and splendidly

1. The estimated expenditure for 1899-1900 is £17,254.
2. The life in these two Libraries is well depicted in an attractive description, not easily surpassed, with the heading: "A few hours in the Free Library," in the *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 18th Jan., 1888. It is reprinted in *The Library Journal*, Vol. xiii., 1888., pp. 253-255.
3. Report of the Free Libraries Committee, presented to the Town Council on the 28th Jan. (Proceedings of the Council 28th Jan., 1879, Minute 11,458), and 17th and 18th Annual Report, pp. 1-16. Also "Birmingham's Criminal Carelessness" (*The Library Journal*, Vol. iv., 1879, p. 56).

decorated and adorned in its exterior and interior.¹ Through the porch and hall, where numerous announcements and communications concerning the Libraries are put up, we enter the Central Lending Library and News Room, or by a palatial staircase reach the Reading Room of the Reference Library.

I. The Reference Library.

The Reference Library claims our chief interest. It is, of its kind the greatest collection of books among all Public Libraries of the Kingdom, surpassing in number of volumes even the older Reference Libraries of the larger towns, Manchester and Liverpool. Through the burning down, as before mentioned, of the old building, the collection of about 50,000 volumes was almost entirely destroyed, only about 2,000 volumes being saved. Valuable special collections were entirely lost. Notwithstanding this immense injury, the fire was—in its consequences—favourable for the Library, for new arrangements could be made embodying the experiences gained during 12 years. With the amount paid by the Insurance Companies (about £9,000), also thanks to a fund brought together by the citizens amounting to £14,147 10s. 3d., with the gifts offered by the Queen, the Trustees of the British Museum, the Manchester Free Libraries Committee, and many other Libraries, Booksellers, and private persons, all of which gifts, during two years, amounted to 12,000 volumes, the stock of books had, on re-opening the Library, June 1st, 1882,² been approximately brought up again to the number of volumes lost by the fire. In less than seven years the number had doubled, and in consequence of the continued expenditure of large sums for the purchase of books³ and the donations,⁴ it reached on March 31st, 1899, the number of 142,960 volumes.⁵ The selection and choice of books has from the very beginning been most careful. The leading principles for this are the following⁶:

1. That the Library should, as far as practicable, represent every phase of human thought, and every variety of opinion.
2. That books of permanent value and of standard interest should form the principal portion of the Library.

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1. An exact description of the same is given in the 20th and 21st Annual Report, pp. 1-5, a short one by F. J. Burgoyne, "Library Construction, Architecture, Fittings, and Furniture" (The Library Series, ii. London, 1897, pp. 144-5).
 2. An extensive report concerning the Opening Celebration is found in the 20th Annual Report, pp. 5-66; a good shorter one by H. R. T[edder], "Opening of the Birmingham Libraries" (Monthly Notes of the Library Association, Vol. III., 1882, pp. 84-89), and J. J. Ogle, "The Free Library" (The Library Series, i. London, 1897), pp. 50-53, giving extracts of the specially noticeable speeches made on that occasion.
 3. From January 1, 1881, to March 31, 1899, there were expended: £36,666 13s. 11d. for books, and £2,110 6s. 7d. for periodicals and journals, making a total of £38,777 0s. 6d.
 4. 28,006 volumes, or 31 per cent. of the increase, were received as donations between Jan. 1, 1881, and Mar. 31, 1899.
 5. 2,940 volumes had at that date been removed, on account of being worn out, or for other reasons.
 6. The 17th and 18th Annual Report, pp. 14-16. The 19th Annual Report, pp. 1-3.

3. That it should contain those rare and costly works which are generally out of the reach of individual students and collectors, and which are not usually found in provincial or private Libraries.

Moreover, after the fire, a continuous effort was made to replace the most important of the lost works.

Within this Library, planned and increased in accordance with the above principles, there have been formed several special Collections.

To these belongs first of all the Patent Library, which originated in a bequest of 200 vols., left to the town in 1855, consisting of the publications of the English Patent Office. It now contains about 6,000 volumes, and increases by about 200 volumes per year. It contains all the publications of the English Patent Office since 1617, those of the United States since 1790, and in addition those of Canada, Victoria, and Queensland.

A second special Library is the Shakespeare Memorial Library, which, like the one founded in 1864 and destroyed by fire, has been designed with the intention of founding a literary monument to the poet in the principal city of Warwickshire, the county wherein is situated Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon, and to do so by gathering together as far as possible all the different editions of his works, and the books concerning him and his writings. This collection is, as to value, surpassed only by that of the British Museum; as far as the number of volumes is concerned, it is second to none.¹ On March 31st, 1899, it contained 10,089 volumes, consisting of 699 different editions in 3,636 volumes, among which are found the first four Folios, 2,324 volumes of editions of the separate plays (including seven Quartos²) and 4,129 volumes of Shakespeariana. There are books in 28 languages, viz., Bengali, Bohemian, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, Flemish, French, Frisian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Latin, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Roumanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, Wallachian, and Welsh. English claims out of the aforementioned numbers 6,569, German 2,285, French 594, Italian 179.

Other special Collections are devoted to Byron, Milton³ and Cervantes. The Cervantes Collection is intended to replace a valuable collection given as a legacy by William Bragge in 1873, consisting of 590 volumes by Cervantes, or works in reference to him, which was totally destroyed by fire. The present collection contains about 520 volumes.

As specially important has yet to be mentioned the rich collection of printed works, including music, charts, maps, photographs, etc., which in any way refer to Warwickshire, and to Birmingham

1. The collection of the British Museum (Shakespeare) Library had in 1897, according to printed catalogue, 6,253 vols.
2. Loocrine 1595, Henry V. 1608, Henry VI., part 1, 1619, Henry VI., parts 1 and 2, 1619, Richard III., 1634, Two Noble Kinsmen 1634, King Lear 1655.
3. The approximately correct number of volumes in the Byron Collection is 450, Milton 230.

especially.¹ It has been the successful endeavour of the administration to aim in this at the greatest possible completeness. In the Collection for Birmingham itself even the smallest matters, such as public announcements and playbills, are included. Specially valuable are the cuttings from the local papers, which are of a most miscellaneous character. The extent of that entire collection may be understood, when we consider that in the Catalogue of the Reference Library 13 closely printed quarto pages are required to record the contents of the Warwickshire Collection, and no fewer than 94 for Birmingham alone.²

The Reference Library is in truth a choice collection. Its high value is perhaps shown best by the average price per volume, which is about eight shillings. All the Sciences are excellently represented, and to the special interests of an industrial population special attention has been paid. A good survey of those literary treasures, which about 1885 were in the Library, was given in thirteen public lectures by experts in the different domains, whereof twelve were printed³ and issued in two volumes under the title: "Books for a Reference Library, Series I. and II., London, Birmingham and Leicester, 1385-88."⁴ Among the additions during last year there were found some German books, mostly however in translations, for example: Bismarck, Reflections and Reminiscences; Holm, History of Greece; Ratzel, History of Mankind; Schnabel, Metallurgy; Wagner, Chemical Technology; Weichardt, Pompeji vor der Zerstoerung. Speaking generally, fiction is excluded, only the writings of standard authors no longer living finding a place on the shelves. Worthy of note is the number of periodicals received by the Library. The latest report enumerates 72 weeklies, 5 fortnightlies, 129 monthlies, 73 quarterlies, and 337 annuals; but among these are found several publications which according to custom would have to be designated as continuations. To the above numbers there are yet to be added six Birmingham and the nine most important London papers, and thirteen weekly papers, which are likewise taken in the other Libraries, but here are kept filed.⁵ The total number taken is 644, whereof 235=36% are gifts. Among the German periodicals are to be mentioned: Deutsche Rundschau, Shakespeare-Jahrbuch,

1. Of the extraordinarily valuable Staunton Warwickshire Collection, purchased in 1875 for £2,285, only 3 vols. were saved from the fire (cf. Shakespeare and other Lectures, by George Dawson, edited by George St. Clair. London, 1888: "The Staunton Warwickshire Collection," pp. 170-175).
2. Cf. The Library Chronicle, Vol. ii., 1885, p. 120-21; lately the Collection, its increase, and treatment have been exhaustively discussed by Richard W. Mould, "Local Literature in Public Libraries" (The Library Association Record, Vol. i., 1899, pp. 584-586).
3. Birmingham Reference Library Lectures, No. 1, &c., London, Birmingham, and Leicester [1885-88].
4. Cf. Edwin H. Woodruff, "The Birmingham Lectures." (The Library Journal, Vol. xii., 1887, pp. 253-4.
5. Most Birmingham and London newspapers and illustrated periodicals, on account of great demand and use in the Reference Library, are taken in in duplicate. If, on going to be bound, they are too worn for the purpose, new sets are bought.

Botanischer Jahresbericht, Zoologischer Jahresbericht, Zoologischer Anzeiger, Annalen der Physik und Chemie, Annalen der Chemie, Jahresbericht der Chemie.

For additions to the collection, the average annual expenditure for the last nine years was for books, £765 5s. 7d., and for periodicals and journals, £158 17s. 9d. During last year the expenditure on books was £664 3s. 11d., and on periodicals £196 13s. 5d. The donations of books amounted since 1881 on an average to 1,288 volumes per annum, or 28% of the average growth; during last year 1,406 volumes, or 32% of the increase, were presented. Moreover, it has to be taken into consideration that during these latter years, on account of want of space, only thoroughly suitable—and lately only valuable—presents of books have been accepted.

The classification of this treasure of books is rather crude. The following five classes with diverse sub-divisions have been formed:—

- A. Theology; Ecclesiastical History; Moral Philosophy.
- B. Geography; Voyages and Travels; History; British Topography; History of England, Ireland, and Scotland; Biography; Birmingham; Parliamentary Reports.
- C. Law; Politics; Political Economy; Education; Patents.
- D. Astronomy; Botany; Chemistry; Geology; Natural History; Science; Archæology; Architecture and Art.
- E. 1. Dictionaries; Encyclopædias; Dialects; Grammars; Language; Phonography.
2. Poetry and the Drama (including the Shakespeare Memorial Library).
3. Periodicals of a general character.
4. Miscellaneous (including Classics, Cervantes Collection, Bibliography).¹

Within these main divisions there has hardly been undertaken any further special division. General works are as a rule put before special ones; here and there single groups are treated by themselves, for example: works on Paris are not included in the alphabetical order of the works on France, but form a group by themselves; and in all classes the pamphlets are grouped together under distinctive headings, such as Church History, Philosophy, Sunday, Theology, etc. Otherwise the alphabetical principle prevails. The works are arranged in alphabetical order under the names of the authors, or under the title where the work is anonymous.² As an example the division History may be taken. First we have the index of the Maps and Atlases, alphabetically arranged according to their editors, then the works referring to General History. The Continents follow as sub-divisions according to alphabet, and under these in alphabetical order, Countries,

1. The number of volumes in the separate classes, on March 31st, 1899, was as follows: A, 9,055; B, 60,540; C, 9,232; D, 27,822; E1, 2,423; E2, 14,504; E3, 7,452; E4, 11,932.
2. For example, in the division Bibliography, Bibliographies and Catalogues are given always under the name of the country or the place in question.

Towns, Mountains, Seas, etc. For example: Europe begins with the general works, after which follow the sub-divisions, viz.: Adriatic, Albania, Alps (together with pamphlets about the same), Athens and Attica, Austria, etc. In these latter sub-divisions are all books arranged in alphabetical order, as described, that in any way refer to the country under consideration.

In this way every volume in the Library is entered in the Shelf Catalogue separately. This Catalogue consists of 36 folio volumes, and affords plenty of room for additions.

The public have access to this Catalogue on application, but generally confine themselves to the printed Catalogue with manuscript additions. This is a Catalogue of author and subject in one alphabet, such as is generally used in England and America. Every non-anonymous work is entered under the name or names of the authors, editors, etc., besides which, every book is entered under one or several effective headings, in the choice of which not only the title, but also the context, is taken into consideration. The most important of these headings again have sub-divisions. The most comprehensive headings are under A: Abyssinia; Africa; Agriculture; America (with the divisions: Bibliography, Libraries, Pamphlets, Patents, Periodicals); Angling; Anglo-Saxon; Architecture; Arctic; Artists, Art and Arts (with British Museum, Art Pamphlets, Art Periodicals, Catalogues and Notices of Art Exhibitions, and seven other sub-divisions); Astronomy; Atlas (under this America, British, Classical and Historical, General, Physical); Australia and Australasia. The entry is in all places as brief as possible, giving only the accession number, name of author, title, which is frequently shortened, number of volumes, size, and date of publication. The place of publication is not given. Of most periodicals only the first volume is entered. In some few cases, however, where they contain few and more important essays, such as *Archæologia*, the contents of the separate volumes are enumerated.

The printing of this catalogue was begun in 1883 and completed in 1890,¹ and consists of 1,284 quarto pages. Copies of the same, printed on one side, are mounted upon the blank leaves of large folio volumes provided with guards, two volumes being necessary to contain the complete catalogue. The titles of the works added since the printing of the catalogue are written in these volumes. Of the eight complete catalogues, formed in this manner, four lie ready for the use of the public in the Reading Room, two are kept in readiness for the same purpose, another is in the Chief Librarian's Room, and one is always in the process of being written up. In spite of replacing some of the pages here and there, the catalogues are now very crowded, and in many places difficult to consult. A supplementary volume to the printed catalogue is, however, under preparation.

Of the Shakespeare Library this catalogue contains only the books that are most frequently used, and of which two copies have been obtained. Of the Shakespeare Memorial Library itself, two

1. *Birmingham Free Libraries. Catalogue of the Reference Library*, by J. D. Mullins, 1883-1890, £1 1s.

written copies of a complete catalogue have been made, which are given to the readers on application. The arrangement of the works is according to the languages, English, French, and German coming first, the others following according to the alphabet. Among the languages the arrangement is as follows :—

- I. Editions of the Works.
- II. Editions of the Selections.
- III. Editions of the Separate Plays.
- IV. Plays ascribed to Shakespeare.
- V. Editions of the Poems.
- VI. Shakespeariana.

In the first division the books are arranged in chronological order, in the second division in alphabetical order of editors or compilers, in the third, fourth, and fifth divisions the plays, etc., in alphabetical order first and then chronological, and in the sixth division in alphabetical order of authors and principal subjects. This catalogue is now being printed, the first section, containing English Editions of Shakespeare's Works, Separate Plays, and Poems, having been issued.¹

Fuller details of the books in the Library are given in the Stock Book, in which all books are entered in the order in which they are added to the Library. This book contains the accession number, title, author, and all details concerning the condition of the book and the manner of its acquisition, *i.e.*, whether gift, purchase or exchange, together with the price or value. The accession number and the staff location are the only designations which the volume bears. In order to find a book on the shelves the Location Book has to be consulted. This book now consists of sixteen volumes, each containing 10,000 numbers. The entry in the Location Book states in which press and on which one of the numbered shelves a volume stands, the word "special" being added in the case of works of special value.

A fire-proof room contains the entire Birmingham Collection, many of the more valuable works in all divisions, and all such works as it would be difficult, if not impossible, to replace. The other books are for the most part on wall-shelves in the Reading Room and in a few Sub-Rooms. In the main they are arranged according to the order of the books in the Shelf Catalogue. The space has been made the best possible use of by placing together books of about equal size, the size of the books diminishing from the bottom shelf upwards, so that the smallest books are at the top.

The system of bookshelves in use in all the Public Libraries of Birmingham, and in many other English Libraries, is that invented by E. Tonks, Ltd., of Birmingham, and called Tonks's Patent Fittings.² A change in the position of single shelves, which here are about three feet in length, is very easily made.

1. Birmingham Free Libraries. Reference Department. An Index to the Shakespeare Memorial Library. First part. 1900. 1s.
2. Cf. F. J. Burgoyne, "Library Construction, etc." (The Library Series, ii. London, 1897), p. 51, where two illustrations are given. On both sides and ends of the vertical wooden supports there are screwed strong metal strips,

The management of the Reference Library is most carefully organised in all its details.¹ Besides the Chief Librarian, whose strenuous activity the work demands, there are in the Reference Library, including the assistants for the Patent Library, which is in another building, 17 regular officials,² viz., a Sub-Librarian, 6 Senior Assistants, 10 Juniors, and in addition 5 Jewish Assistants employed for Sunday duty only.

Additions to the stock are made in the following way. The Chief Librarian submits to the Committee the Proposal Books, containing works desirable for addition.³ In cases where the book is unknown, or from any other cause doubtful, a copy is submitted on approval to the Committee before being ordered. New books are generally bought from one Birmingham bookseller. Orders for second-hand books go all over the country and also abroad. The books when received are examined by the Chief Librarian; the accounts, after examination, are forwarded to the City Treasurer for payment. A list of gifts is submitted every month to the Committee, with whom the decision as to the acceptance or rejection rests. Thanks circulars, differently worded to suit the varying value of the gifts, are sent to the donors, and for the most valuable presents a tasteful, artistically executed chromolithographic card is used. The gifts are entered in a Donation Book, and a donation label is fastened in the work containing the name of the giver and date. Every volume is collated, and on the inner side of the cover is fastened a register giving the year and month of addition, and on this register the issue of the book is recorded. The register is ruled to contain 90 entries, and when filled is replaced by a fresh one, the number of issues on the previous register and the time over which they spread being recorded on the back of the title-page. The cataloguing is done in the following way. The officer in charge of this department examines the book to see to what division it belongs, and finds a place where, according to its contents and its size, it should stand. In doubtful cases the matter is referred to the Chief Librarian for decision. The book is then entered in the Location Book, receiving the number of the line on which it is entered. This number is placed on the back of the title-page. The entries necessary for the Stock Book, the Shelf and Public Catalogues, are then written on long, narrow paper slips. The book, together with the invoice and catalogue slips, is then submitted to the Chief Librarian, who examines the slips to see that they have been correctly made, checks the number in

in which are found oblong rectangular holes, at lin. distance from each other. Four small cast-iron tablets, which with a projecting angle grip into the grooves, and thereby are placed horizontally, carry the wooden bookshelves. One foot length of such iron strips costs 2½d., one gross of tablets, 5s.

1. A lively picture of the daily business activity was once given by the present Chief Librarian: "A Day's Work in the Birmingham Reference Library," by Alfred Capel Shaw (*South Birmingham News*, 20th November and 11th December, 1886. The article in the last-named number concludes with the remarks: "To be continued." No continuation, however, has yet appeared).
2. There is one official to about each 8,400 vols.
3. The public may express in this and the other Libraries wishes as to any kind of books, in a book kept for this purpose.

the Location Book, and finally signs the invoice as correct. The volume is then cut, and stamped on the title page, the first, middle, and last pages, and every separate plate is also stamped. If the volume is already bound, it is at once put in its place on the shelf, or else in a show case on the counter, which contains about 300 of the most important recent additions, for about three months. Works in paper covers have to be bound before they can be issued. In this case, however, a wooden block, made in the form of a book and of equal size, containing a notice as to where the book is at the time, is put in the place of the book on the shelf. The titles of books added are entered on three lists and hung in the Reading Room, and the contents of the Catalogue slips are, if at all possible, entered within a week in each one of the Catalogues for the counters. As the despatch of these labours is organised in the most careful way, a book is very quickly accessible for general use.

We have still to mention the treatment of Journals, Periodicals, and Serials. A new periodical is catalogued on the arrival of the first part. In a Periodical Book, specially arranged for Journals and Serials, there is noted down when each number may be expected, when obtained, and when the last complete volume was bound. According to the frequency of publication, the papers are divided into groups: weekly, monthly, and quarterly, etc. As soon as new numbers arrive they are put in the place of the previous number on the tables in the Reading Room, the latter being then filed in boxes and kept there until ready for binding. Current numbers of such periodicals as are not placed on the tables are put at once on the shelf destined for the complete volume.

The same method is adopted with regard to pamphlets which, in connection with others, are intended to form one volume. First they are put together according to size under the heading to which they belong. For distinguishing sizes the letters A—Z, referring to respective heights from 6—31 inches, are used, thus: Church History $\frac{A}{1}$ is the designation for the first volume of pamphlets, six inches high, bound together as Church History.¹

The manner in which the English Parliamentary Reports are treated deserves special notice. These are not bound up according to years, but are separated into numerous sub-divisions according to subject, for example: under Army, Africa, Canada, etc., all the reports relating to those subjects are collected. Where the reports are thin they are sewn on files and kept in boxes until a sufficient number of similar reports have been received to make a fairly thick volume. This method involves a large amount of work, but is found most useful for the public, as they naturally more often require all the reports on a special subject than all the separate reports of a single year.

The four kinds of books last referred to form by far the larger part of the additions to the Library which require binding. Few

1. More special data concerning this are given by Richard W. Mould, "Local Literature in Public Libraries" (Library Association Record, Vol. I., 1899, p. 585).

complete works that are unbound are obtained for the Library, and these are nearly all foreign publications. The work of binding is distributed among several bookbinders. The books requiring binding are prepared by the officer in charge of this department. The binders fetch them from the Library, together with the binding sheets, on which have been entered the necessary directions. The books, together with the directions, are also entered in the binding book, which is kept at the Library. All the books are expected to be returned within two weeks, or if repairs only, within a week. Small labels, bearing the name of the firm, which it is the binder's duty to fix into the volumes, show at once by whom the work has been done. As a rule, books are not allowed to be cut by the binders at all, and advertisements are bound in with the books. For the backs and corners of the volumes, morocco, calf, and pigskin are the materials chiefly employed; cloth is used only for such books as are light, or will be used but little. The name of the Library is impressed on the backs of all books rebound.

The building arrangements of the Reference Library are in accordance with an earlier type.¹ A single large Room contains the entire staff and the greater part of the books and readers, an arrangement which offers more advantage to the administration than to the public, who in this way are deprived of a certain amount of quiet. The Room consists of two spaces joining at right angles. The main space is 100 feet long by 64 feet broad, ends in an apse, and is divided by granite pillars and columns into a middle space 50 feet high, and two side spaces 25 feet high. The columns are joined by arches, above which rises a clerestory bearing the roof-beams of the glass roof. Owing to this arrangement, and also to the splendidly-toned and coloured painting, the stained glass windows, and the use throughout of light polished oak for the richly-wrought gothic bookcases, shelves² and other furniture, the Room creates an impression both imposing and brilliant. The Wing is simpler in style; in length it is 62 feet, in breadth 45 feet, in height 42 feet, and lighted exclusively by skylight. From here we pass into a charming room, built in Elizabethan style, which contains the Shakespeare Collection. The lighting of the room during the day-time is excellent, in the evening it is—like the entire building—lighted exceedingly well by electric pendants in all parts.³

1. The ground plan of both floors of the building and a view of the Reading Room are given by J. L. Pascal, "The Libraries and Faculties of Medicine in England" (*Revue générale de l'architecture*, xli., 1884, p. 50-51; also separately, Paris, 1884). The latter is reproduced in the *Handbuch der Architektur*, part IV., half vol. 6, number 4, Darmstadt, 1893, p. 112. Two views of the room are also given by Greenwood, "Free Public Libraries," London, 1886, p. 64-65. But all these pictures still show the Art Collection in the wing of the room, whence it was removed in 1885.
2. The shelves are protected by blinds, which are let down when the room is closed, to keep out the dust.
3. Last year the electric light, instead of gas used formerly, was introduced. A Commission had been instituted to enquire concerning the hurtful effect of gas lighting on the binding of books, and had made examinations worthy of notice; cf. *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, V., 1888, pp. 551-2.

The Room is separated into two unequal parts by means of a counter and rail, which run all round. The space behind the counter, 6 feet 6 inches wide, is for the use of the officials. The space in front of the counter, which is reserved for the use of the public, is furnished with two large octagonal tables for large books, and with forty-seven rectangular tables, 10 feet long and 1 foot 11 inches broad, with seats for one side only, and comfortable arm-chairs. Three of the tables are reserved for ladies, a notice to this effect being placed in the notice cases. Under the chairs are found rails for hats, and by their sides rings and pans for umbrellas and sticks. There are no cloak-rooms or lavatories, etc., for the public, inside the buildings. The room affords sitting accommodation for 204 readers, but there would be room for six more tables with four seats each. The room also contains—as do the Reading Rooms of all the Birmingham Public Libraries—a hand fire-pump and six buckets. Busts of the Antiquarian, William Hamper, and of Samuel Timmins and George Dawson,¹ two men of distinguished service to the Library, are placed in the Room. In the end of August, 1899, two large glass covered cases for valuable works were provided; this arrangement is very popular. A gallery, provided with a finely-wrought gilded iron railing, runs round the entire building, so that the walls up to the very ceiling can be used for the accommodation of books. Yet even with this the shelves are so high that the use of ladders is required. As far as the existing shelves are concerned, the Library is already more than full of books. It had not been imagined that the growth would be so rapid, and consequently this was too little considered at the time of building. Notwithstanding that in 1885 three rooms from the next building were appropriated, the Library has, within twenty years, outgrown its available space. By shelving a portion of the basement, however, accommodation has been provided for the next few years.

The Reading Room, except on Good Friday and Christmas Day,² is open on week-days from 10 a.m. till 10 p.m., and on Sundays³ from 3 till 9 p.m., to anyone above 14 years of age. For children under 14 years of age a special permit is required.

The current Periodicals are not served on slips as books are, but are placed in strong covers and arranged in alphabetical order on tables⁴ accessible to the public. Printed lists, containing the

1. A statue of Dawson is placed in the hall. On the pedestal stand the magnificent words in which he closed his speech at the inauguration of the Library:—"We have here made provision for our people—for *all* our people—of God's greatest and best gifts unto man." (George Dawson, Opening of the Free Reference Library, Oct. 26, 1866, Inaugural Address [Birmingham, 1866], and reprinted in "Shakespeare and other Lectures," pp. 154-169).
2. On Bank Holidays, however, no books are given out.
3. The opening on Sundays commenced April 28th, 1872, but this was against a strong opposition. Petitions, with 6,468 names subscribed, were presented against it.
4. Every morning, before opening the room, these covers are put in order by one of the junior assistants, while a senior convinces himself that every cover is there, in good condition, and containing the latest number, and he

names of the newspapers and periodicals taken in the Central Libraries, hang in several places.¹ There is also a select Library of books placed on shelves to which the public have access without the necessity of filling up the usual reader's ticket. These shelves contain about 800 volumes, viz.: 88 different Directories,² 25 whereof are presented, Encyclopædias, Dictionaries, Bibliographies, Atlases, and indeed works of reference of all kinds, also Jurisprudential, Historic, Artistic, Natural Science, and other leading works, and in addition the publications of the University Correspondence College Press.³ No special Catalogue of these books exists, but the public are able to see for themselves what books are on the shelves, and brief lists afford additional information. Furthermore, the Reading Room serves for using all the other books of the Library, with the exception of the Specifications of Patents.

These latter, in fact, are not kept in the same building, but have been stored in the Council House near. The collection there is under the administration of one official, and may be used from Mondays to Fridays between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. till 9 p.m. In a well-lighted room, furnished with three very large tables and twelve chairs, are laid out eight papers and periodicals concerning Patents. Some works of reference, Indexes for all Specifications, and Abridgments of Specifications, as published by the English Patent Office, form a select Library for frequent reference.

The handing over of any of the books, not directly accessible to the public, follows after the filling up of one of the reader's tickets, which are placed in clamps on the counter for the use of the public. For consulting books in the Show Case, and the bound and unbound volumes of periodicals, a short statement of title suffices, and the book required is at once produced. For other books, the number must be found in the Catalogue.

For a public of all classes and grades of culture and education, such as visit this Library, and unaccustomed to the use of an alphabetic catalogue that has been arranged on fixed principles, and of a systematic catalogue founded upon a scientific system, this Dictionary Catalogue is in a general way satisfactory. The inquirer will, in most cases, in one or the other place, not only find the very

confirms this in the newspaper and periodical checking book for each one. This is done in all the Libraries.

1. No periodical or newspaper may, if another person desires its use, be retained by the former reader for longer than 10 minutes. The visitors are instructed by notices, put up in all the Libraries of the City, that, in case they are unable to find any given paper, they are to refer to an official, who would in each case assist them at once.
2. Of the Birmingham Directory there are eight annual sets, for the last four years two copies.
3. It is interesting that this Library for frequent reference owes its origin directly to a paper read at the 10th annual meeting of the Library Association, held in Birmingham, in 1887, concerning the experiences made with such a library; J. E. Foster, "An open Reference Library at Cambridge." (*The Library Chronicle*, Vol. V., 1888, pp. 71-73.)

book he is looking for, but likewise other works on the same subject suitable for his purpose. If he cannot, the officials, who are at their work right opposite the counter where the reader stands to consult the Catalogue, are always ready to give every possible information.

The fetching down of the books required, which as a rule is done by the younger assistants, and which takes precedence of all other work, follows very quickly. The procedure is as follows: the official receives the slip, puts his initials thereon, and finds out from the location book the shelf on which the volume stands, in case this is not already known to him. He takes out the book, lays the slip in its place, dusts the book carefully, and hands it to the waiting visitor. If in the location book he finds the book marked as specially valuable, he has to hand the slip to one of the Seniors, who requests the reader to fill up a special application form, and then issues the book, unless he in his turn finds it desirable to refer to the Chief Librarian, who in his turn may refer the case to the Libraries Committee. On returning the book, the reader does not have the slip returned to him. As a rule no volume is kept down from the shelves for the next or any following day; works desired for succeeding days have each time to be asked for afresh; only in case of leaving the place for a short time in the course of the day, will books be set aside. The volumes used and returned are examined as to their condition, and the date of issue carried on to the inside register, and as soon as possible, in any case before the opening of the room on the next day, they are put back into their places on the shelves, the assistant at the same time removing the slip and putting his initials thereon. An older assistant passes each morning through all the divisions, to see if any slips have been left behind. These slips of the books issued are collected, sorted according to the classes of books, and the number of volumes issued on them counted for statistical purposes. The issue for the day thus arrived at is recorded in a book for that purpose, the slips themselves being kept for three months for investigation, if necessary.

All classes of the community are represented among the readers, but more especially the cultured ones.¹ The approximate daily number of readers is given in the latest report as 800. This figure is too high a statement; it can at best be considered as correct for the winter months only.² In the Reading Room of the Patent Library, in the year 1898, the average number of readers was 6,789, that is an average of 23 daily=2.7 per hour. The current periodicals are very much read. The administration considers their use to be as extensive as the books given out on slips from the shelves. Moreover

1. Many of the wealthier classes, however, for the most part, use the Birmingham (Old) Library, an excellent subscription Library, which has now existed for upwards of 120 years, which, in its new and well ordered home (Cf. The Library Association Record, Vol. 1, 1889, pp. 725-727) is, under the leadership of Mr. C. E. Scarse, admirably managed.
2. This may also be said of the figures, given in the annual reports, concerning the other Reading Rooms. The average number of daily readers is fixed as follows: On one day the number of the people entering the room during the first hour after opening are counted, next day during the second hour, and

the Public Shelves, both at the Patent Library and in the Reference Library, are used very extensively indeed. The average yearly number of volumes issued on readers' tickets during the last ten years amounted to 198,236, whereof 37,768 were Patents; for the first five years, 201,733, of which 32,663 were Patents; and for the last five years, 194,738, of which 42,872 were Patents.

In the year 1898/99 were issued 196,307 volumes, of which 154,456, or 78·7%, were books kept at the Reference Library. Most used was Class B, with 55,815, or 28·4% of the total volumes issued. About equally used were the books of Class D, of which were issued 41,649=21·2% of the total, and Class E, of which were issued 40,198¹=20·5%. From Class A were only required 10,816 volumes, or 5·6%, and from Class C 5,978, volumes or 3%. Of the Specifications of Patents of late years, those mostly required were those referring to cycles and lamps. During the last year in the Reading Room of the Reference Library, there were on an average issued on week days 471, amounting to 39 per hour, on Sundays 202, or 34 per hour, and at the Patent Library, in the year 1898, daily 131 volumes, or 15 per hour.

Notwithstanding the perfect liberty for everyone to enter the Room,² to use the books on the Public Shelves, to read the periodicals and journals on the tables, and to ask for as many volumes from the Library as he may desire to have for use at the same time, without there being any check as to whether he gives his right name and address on the ticket, which in case of need might make it possible to institute inquiries, and with no more supervision than can be given from behind the counter, yet damage done to, or loss of books is of rare occurrence.³

* * *

Although the cataloguing of the Reference Library is not of a very high standard, and although one might desire some things in the administration to be simpler or somewhat different, yet the

so on, these figures being added. But since this census is taken once per annum only, and always during the winter half-year, when all reading-rooms are visited more frequently, the numbers obtained are not correct average numbers for the year. On this see translator's note affixed:

Translator, who has during many years made extensive use of the Reference Library, and thus had plentiful opportunity to observe the bee-hive like activity of both Reference and Lending Departments, begs to differ here from the author's estimate, and to express her opinion—based on careful countings at different times of the day, and in diverse seasons—that the *official* statement is by *no* means to be considered too high.

1. From the Shakespeare Library, belonging to Class E, there were issued to 911 readers 1,711 books in 13 different languages, or not quite a fifth part of the Library.
2. "Clean hands expected," and "No dogs admitted," are the only two regulations which meet the eye. Drunken people, of course, are excluded.
3. Notices put up everywhere in all the Reading Rooms of the Libraries, draw attention to the Malicious Injuries to Property Act, 24 and 25 Vic. c. 97, sec. 39, according to which, for such damage done, imprisonment not exceeding six months with hard labour is threatened. The assistance of the

Library as a whole deserves the highest recognition. The gathering together of the books has been performed in strict adherence to principles based on a correct understanding of the tasks that had to be accomplished: the tasks that fall to the share of a Library founded in a great industrial and provincial Capital; and in that spirit it is continually and largely added to. This store of books is not yet used to such an extent as corresponds to its high worth, but its importance and use will probably increase, when the University now planned for Birmingham, and whose foundation is assured, is opened. As to the manner, however, in which this collection of books is accessible, this Library may, in the ideal sense of the conception, be considered as a representative and pattern Library. It is open to everyone, from morning until late in the evening, even on Sundays from 3 to 9 p.m., without having to fulfil any formality whatever. The books most frequently wanted and the latest numbers of all periodicals may be used at once; the older numbers and the bound volumes are obtainable without delay. The additions are very soon made ready for public use, and the public can in an easy way become acquainted with them. The Catalogues give sufficient information concerning the contents of the collection, and every book desired is handed to anyone in the shortest possible time. The officials, with great kindness, advise and assist the readers.

II. The Lending Libraries and News Rooms.

Entirely different from the Reference Library are the Lending Libraries and News Rooms, consisting of the Central Lending Library and News Room, opened in 1865, and nine Branch Libraries and News Rooms, viz.: Constitution Hill (1861), Adderley Park (1864), Deritend (1866), Gosta Green (1868), Bloomsbury (1892), Harborne (1892), Spring Hill (1893), Small Heath (1893), Balsall Heath (1896). The Branch Libraries are distributed over the whole City, in the most populous parts of the old town, and in the centres of intercourse of formerly independent adjacent places. This scheme is for the present considered as finished, since it is easy for every inhabitant to reach a Library. The estimated population of Birmingham amounted in 1898 to 510,343, hence there is such a Library near at hand for about each 51,000 people.

Concerning the building in which the Central Lending Library is domiciled together with the Reference Library, we have treated above. Among the Branch Libraries the following are specially noteworthy: the Balsall Heath Library, built in the style of English Renaissance¹; the Spring Hill Library, in Gothic style; and the Bloomsbury² and Small Heath Libraries, both adorned with fine

public in protecting the property of the City is requested; a reward of £1 is promised to anyone giving sufficient information to lead to conviction of the offender in court. For discovery of the person who in 1882 had cut a large portion out of two books, a reward of £20 was offered. Proceedings of the Council, 7th Feb., 1882, Minute 12.671.

1. Cf. The 15th Annual Report, p. 12.

2. Cf. Greenwood's Public Libraries, 4th Ed., p. 156.

sculptures.¹ Built of smooth bricks, richly cased with terra-cotta, and furnished with clock towers visible from afar, these four buildings are important creations of modern architecture, and the handsomest adornments of the part of the City where they stand. The characteristic of the internal arrangement of all these Libraries is one single large room, besides which there are in most of the buildings one or two smaller rooms for the administration, in the Balsall Heath and Bloomsbury Libraries also a fire-proof room. The Room of the Central Lending Library, 26 feet high, has the same shape as the Reading Room of the Reference Library, lying above it, and the principal part is also of the same size of floor; the Wing is considerably larger, viz., 82 feet long, 75 feet broad, and further opens into a spacious side-room. Similar in form to this Room is the Room of the Small Heath Branch Library, with a main Room 70 feet long, 32 feet broad, and a Wing 30 feet in length, and 29 feet in breadth. The Rooms of the other Branch Libraries have, with slight deviations, rectangular bases. Their measurements are as follows: Balsall Heath, 62 feet $\times$ 56 feet 6 inches; Deritend, 64-6 $\times$ 41-6; Gosta Green, 62 $\times$ 42; Bloomsbury, 81 $\times$ 32; Constitution Hill, 60 $\times$ 38; Spring Hill, 47 $\times$ 44; Adderley Park, 37 $\times$ 40; Harborne, 52 $\times$ 25. The Rooms are equally well lighted by day as in the evening. The artificial lighting is effected by large gas burners. The Central Lending Library alone has electric light.

The constant inspection of these Libraries is the work of the Inspector of Lending Libraries; a Librarian presides over each one, to whom are subordinated a number of Assistants.²

The Libraries are open on all week-days, except Bank Holidays, Good Friday, and Christmas Day; the Reading Rooms of the Central Libraries are open on Bank Holidays as well, but the issue of books is suspended.

As their names indicate, they serve a double purpose: for the lending of books, chiefly for use away from the rooms, and for the reading of newspapers and periodicals. A part of the rooms is railed off by barriers and desks as a division for the lending department, by far the larger space being furnished as a Reading Room. In the Spring Hill Library the former part has—on account of limited building site—been placed in a gallery. This arrangement has—as contrasted with the construction of several rooms—the advantage of cheapness, but the disadvantage of less quiet. Yet everything possible has been done to lessen this inconvenience, for example: the chairs in the more recent Libraries are provided with india-rubber pads.

1. The first of these has a frieze, where figures represent the principal industries of the City, pictures of which have appeared in the *Building News*, Vol. I.XIV., 1893, No. 1991; the latter has a beautiful allegorical group over the entrance.
2. In the Central Lending Library there are 2 senior and 6 junior Assistants. In the Branch Libraries there are suitable numbers, viz.: at Balsall Heath, 2 seniors and 5 juniors; Spring Hill, 1 and 3; Bloomsbury, 1 and 2; Small Heath, 1 and 3; Constitution Hill, Deritend, Gosta Green, and Harborne, 1 and 1; and at Adderley Park, 1 Assistant.

The total number of books in the *Lending Libraries* on March 31st, 1899, amounted to 99,258. Of these, 29,827, or 30%, were in the Central Lending Library. The Deritend Library possesses the largest collection among the Branch Libraries; the smallest is at Adderley Park. On the above date the former had 10,676, the latter 4,120 volumes. The Libraries have been built up by the careful selection of good and suitable works. The average price per volume paid last year was about three shillings. In reference to this, it has to be considered that second-hand books are not often bought for the Lending Libraries. All works which are frequently required are provided in sufficient numbers to supply the want. Thus, in the Central Lending Library, for example, Dickens's Works are represented in great numbers. According to the latest catalogue, there are 17 copies of "Little Dorrit," 16 of the "Christmas Books," 15 of "Pickwick Papers," 14 of "Sketches by Boz," 13 of "Bleak House" and "Oliver Twist," 12 of "Nicholas Nickleby," "Old Curiosity Shop," and "Our Mutual Friend," and 11 copies of "Dombey and Son," "Hard Times," and "Martin Chuzzlewit." Of two other of his works, there are nine and eight copies respectively; of two others, seven copies; and of every other work, six, five, four, and three copies respectively. The books in the Libraries are selected from all branches of literature, and therefore correspond to the wants of all classes, both for instruction and entertainment, for serious and light literature. Besides Fiction,¹ Romances, Novels, Novelettes, Tales of all kinds by the best English and American Authors—Bulwer, Cooper, Dickens, Kipling, Captain Marryat, Read, Scott, Thackeray, Miss Braddon, Rosa N. Carey, George Eliot, Edna Lyall, etc., besides Fairy Tales and Tales for the young by Ballantyne, Fenn, Henty, Kingston, Reid, and others; there are also Poetical works, Theological books, good Biographies, Travels, Histories, books on Art; and, in addition, Technical books in great numbers. Furthermore, there are in each Library the chief Operas, Oratorios, and some of the more popular Musical compositions, beside which there has been in the Central Lending Library since 1876, a library of books for the Blind, printed in relief in four different types, including even musical compositions; and, finally, there are books in French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. The latest Catalogue of the Central Lending Library mentions under Class K, excluding the Shakespeare books, 212 volumes in the French division, 221 in the German, 133 Spanish, 23 Italian, and 7 Portuguese.

It is important to notice that the stock of books of the Lending Library is subject to continual change. That is to say, it is not only increased by the addition of new purchases, but also decreased by

1. That in this province excellent work is done in England, is full-well known: cf. Gustav Korting, "Ground Plan of English Literature from its Peginning up to the Present" (Collection of Compendia for Study and Practice I., series 1., 2nd Ed., Munster in Westphalia, 1893), pp. 80-89. Greenwood in Greenwood's Library Year Book, 1897, London, 1897, pp. 107-116, lately again demonstrated the value of this kind of literature, of such selection as—in a general way—is the best of its kind offered in the Public Libraries of Great Britain.

the removal of the older books no longer used, and the worn out copies when not replaced by new ones, because they are out of print, or are considered undesirable.

During the year 1898/99 there were removed : 71 books no longer used, and 387 worn out which were not replaced, being out of print or undesirable ; there were added : by purchase 4,716 new books, and by gift 274, or 5·8% of the increase.

The books are divided into the same five classes, A to E, as those of the Reference Library. As a sixth class there is also added F, Literature for the Young, and in the Central Lending Library follow also the classes : H, Books for the Blind ; I, Birmingham Books ; S, Shakespeare Library ; and K, Foreign Books.¹ Within these classes the volumes have neither alphabetic nor subject-contents order. They are simply arranged in running numbers, given at the time of their reception. In this order they are entered in the Shelf Catalogue, and are marked with their number and letter of classification. The position of the books on the shelves corresponds with the numbering, yet in class D the books on Music are placed (marked with the letters GD), and Poetry and the Drama PE, Miscellaneous LE, Periodicals and Journals ME,² are placed in class E, which under this letter when used alone includes Prose Fiction only.

In the Catalogue destined for general use of each Library the works are mentioned divided according to the classes and divisions, the Music, however, under class D, and Biographies under class B, are specially noted down. In classes I and S the books are arranged in the same sequence of the titles as in the corresponding divisions of the Reference Library. In the remaining classes and divisions the order is alphabetical : in A, E, PE, F, H, K, according to authors, in C, D,³ ME, according to subject or title, and in LE according to authors and subjects in one alphabet. In Biographies, general biographies, according to names of authors, are placed first ; then follow biographical collective works, with mention of their contents in alphabetical order of the subjects ; in conclusion individual biographies are entered under the names of the persons described. For the remaining works of class B, headings according to the subject of the book, where possible, such as Geography, Travels, etc., give the groundwork for the alphabetical arrangement. These groups again are arranged alphabetically according to authors. The entry of the works is as short as possible, only the names of the authors with their initials being given, which latter even are omitted in the entry

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1. The number of books in the individual Classes on 31st March, 1899, was as follows :—A, 4,516 = 4·5% ; B, 16,278 = 16·4% ; C, 1,460 = 1·5% ; D, 12,557 = 12·6% ; E, 54,616 = 54·6% ; F, 8,769 = 8·8% ; H, 460 ; K, 582.
 2. In the divisions there were, March 31st, 1899 :—GD, 1,636 vols. = 1·6% ; E, 45,027 = 45·5% ; PE, 2,373 = 2·4% ; LE, 5,059 = 5% ; ME, 2,157 = 2·2%.
 3. In D the Musical works are arranged under Music, according to the composers ; and the general Natural History works under Natural History, according to the authors.

of works arranged according to headings, then the titles, as brief as is consistent with the identification of the book, are given.¹

The Catalogues of the Lending Libraries are printed; Supplements and New Editions are published when needed. The Catalogue representing the number of books in each Library, for the time being, is mounted in the same way as the Catalogue of the Reference Library, interleaved with paper for additions. This copy, however, is only for the use of the staff, to enter additions when received. For the use of the public, copies of the printed Catalogue are cut into strips and mounted on frames, with room for additions in manuscript at the end. In order, therefore, to see whether any given new book is in the Library, the perusal of these lists is necessary, causing, when the additions become numerous, a certain loss of time to the public. The printed Catalogues are also for sale. Up to 1897 a copy cost from 3d. to 6d., according to the expense of printing. Then the Free Libraries Committee lowered the price of the Catalogues of the Branch Libraries to one penny, that of the Central Lending Library which appeared in October, 1899, in the eighth edition² of 10,000 copies, is being sold for 3d. The expenses of printing are not covered by this, although advertisements are obtained to lessen the cost, for example: an allowance of £40 was made by the printers for advertisements in the last printed Catalogue of the Central Lending Library. Against this loss we may balance the gain that the public are much better enabled to acquaint themselves with the contents of the Libraries. The public have availed themselves of this to a very large extent, nearly 6,000 copies of the Catalogues of the Branch Libraries alone being sold during the last year.

In all the Libraries, except Small Heath, where standing two-sided book-presses are used, the book-shelves are placed against the walls of the rooms. It is noteworthy that, in the Adderley Park, Bloomsbury, Deritend, and Spring Hill Libraries, the arrangement of the shelves is such that the titles of many of the books can be read by the public in the Library, a convenience which in the latest, viz., the Balsall Heath Library, is exceedingly well managed, since there the books are placed along the wall of the room, nearly 60 feet in extent, and are separated by a railing only at just a sufficient distance from the shelves to prevent the public from reaching them, while they can read the titles on the backs of the books with ease.³ In all these Libraries there are Show Cases on the counter, in which all newly acquired books, with the exception of fiction, are displayed for a time, and also other valuable works to which it is desirable to call

1. In the last edition of the Central Lending Library Catalogue, however, the main contents, as far as the Periodicals are concerned, have been stated.
2. Birmingham Free Libraries. Catalogue of the Central Lending Department, Ratcliff Place. New Ed., Birmingham, 1900.
3. In the Central Lending Library and in the Reference Library more shelf room is not available. At present a part of the basement is by lift brought into communication with the first storey and shelved for books, whereby, at the same time, the requirements of the Reference Library are cared for. (Proceedings of the Council, 4th July, 1899, Min. 17,939). This arrangement, however, can only be provisional.

the attention of the public, and books on subjects of current interest at the time. For instance, in July and August, 1899, in these Show Cases, on account of the Transvaal crisis, all books referring to South Africa, as well as guide books and descriptions of other countries and towns, were to be found. The additions to the Libraries are dealt with in much the same way as in the Reference Library. The Librarians prepare lists of books to be ordered, which are examined by the Chief Librarian and then submitted to the Committee. The books, however, are not collated. The class letter and shelf number are stamped upon the back of the volume. Upon the front cover outside is pasted a label, of a different colour for each of the Libraries, bearing the name of the Library, and on the inside of the cover is fastened a register, in which, at the time of issue, the date and number of the issue are recorded. This register allows of 52 entries, and also contains space for the initial of the official to whom the book is returned.

The Lending Departments are open from 10 a.m. till 9 p.m. All burgesses of the City whose names appear on the Burgess Roll or Parliamentary Register have the right to borrow books, on filling up a form stating that they will replace or pay for any book that is lost or considerably damaged by them; and all others, non-burgesses, who are resident, employed in, or rated for the City, are entitled to borrow on presenting a form signed by a burgess, who undertakes the responsibility for compensation upon himself. Vouchers for this declaration, valid for two years, are obtainable gratis. The signature of a burgess as guarantor has to be witnessed by a second person, to prevent names of burgesses from being improperly used. The vouchers sent in are tested by the Burgess Roll or the Parliamentary Register, and if found to be correct, on the fourth day afterwards books can be obtained. If a borrower loses his ticket, he has to obtain a new voucher. The vouchers are marked with running numbers from 1 onwards, bound in order, and kept for over two years. Notice boards give continuous information when the vouchers are out of date. The names of the guarantors and borrowers are arranged alphabetically, and are each registered in a book, giving the number of the voucher. The borrowers' tickets, of different colours for the several Libraries, likewise give the number of the ticket, as well as the name and address of the holder and the date of issue. In order to make accessible to the borrowers of the Branch Libraries, those books—especially foreign ones—which are present only in the Central Lending Library, without obliging the readers to present a second voucher from a burgess, there have, since 1898, been issued temporary tickets, which may be used at the Central Lending Library for all books except English fiction, but this arrangement, however, has not yet been made use of very largely. While the temporary tickets are in use, the ordinary tickets are retained at the Library from which they were issued.

The books are given out without delay. In order to facilitate the issue, there is a Morgan's Indicator¹ in use in the Central Lending

1. It consists of wooden frames, with narrow, low divisions formed of zinc plates, in which lie small wooden blocks, which on one end bear the number of the

Library; the Branch Libraries work without that help. Borrowers at the Central Lending Library have to consult this Indicator to ascertain whether the books required are in or out; at the Branches they are requested to give in a list of at least twelve books. At the Balsall Heath Library everyone may see for himself, thanks to the arrangements made, whether the book he desires is on the shelf. Borrowers may obtain books in the Lending Libraries, for use in the room, by filling up slips similar to those used in the Reference Library, but by far the larger number are borrowed to be taken home, only one work at a time,¹ however, being allowed to each person. When a book is borrowed, the number of the book is entered in a Lending Register, and also the number of the borrower's ticket. An entry is also made in the register inside the book of the date and the progressive number of the issue. When borrowers have no books out, their tickets are left at the Library, and kept in alphabetical order of names. Besides the Lending Register, a Posting Book is also used. In this an entry is made opposite the number of the book, of the day on which it is issued, and the page on which it is found in the Lending Register. In this way it is possible to ascertain on what day and to whom any given book has been issued. When a book is returned, the Assistant examines it to see whether it has been damaged,² or whether any fine is due, and places his initial in the inside register opposite the date of issue. The book is then marked off as returned in the Lending Register and put back on the shelf, if possible on the same day, or at latest before 10 a.m. on the following day.

The time allowed for reading, for books of all classes, is only seven days, including the day of issue. To this rule there is no exception. Considering the few hours which a great number of the readers have to spend on reading, and the impossibility, in the case of many books, of reading them within seven days with real advantage or enjoyment, we must consider this time too short. It is true that the reader may, on the eighth day, renew the same book again if it has not been asked for by another person. He has, however, to suffer the

book on red, and on the other end upon blue ground. If the blue end is turned towards the public, the book may be had; in the other case, not. Before every issue, and after each return of a book, the little wooden block in question is turned by the official. It is interesting that in Birmingham the want of such an apparatus was very early felt, by means of which it might be quickly ascertained whether a book was on the shelf, without the necessity of the officials approaching it. After it had happened that out of 60 numbers given to him, the official had not found one on the shelf, there was in 1869 introduced a peculiar primitive indicator, probably the oldest of its kind; cf. Burgoyne, "Library Construction, etc." (The Library Series, ii., London, 1897), p. 73.

1. The custom which is introduced in many other Public Libraries of England, that a second ticket, not valid for fiction or music, is obtainable, unfortunately is not practised here.
2. In the case of damages mischievously committed, scrawling especially, strict measures are taken; in case of smudges and smears, such as may happen in workshops or by children, and can hardly be avoided, forbearance is practised. In the year 1898-9, £16 15s. 5d. were paid for damages = 1d. for every 227th book issued.

inconvenience of having to bring the book back to the Library for this purpose; otherwise he incurs the fine of one penny for every week, or part of a week, following the week of issue. The large amount of these fines, which, moreover, as will be shown hereafter, are not even all paid, best proves how insufficient the time allowed for reading is.¹

On the other hand, the tardy borrower is treated with great patience. If he has not returned the book within a month, he receives a printed circular asking for its return. If that notice is of no avail, a second follows in a week. If he leaves that unattended to, a circular is sent to the guarantor, and, if necessary, a second circular.² If these circulars are without effect, another circular follows after another week, with the remark that if the book is not received within a week, or its value paid, the matter will be put into the hands of the Town Clerk. If the book is not returned within seven days after this circular, the matter is reported to the Town Clerk, and he sends forth a final demand to deliver the book within three days, or make good its value. A similar proceeding takes place if the charge for damage done to a book has not been paid. If, however, the case is one of payment of fines for the detention of a book only, a circular certainly is sent to the person in question, but the administration is not in the position to enforce this payment, since neither the burgess who borrows in his own right, nor the guarantor who has become surety for another, is obliged to pay such fines. As a matter of fact, a great many of these fines remain unpaid, and the only consequence, as far as the debtor is concerned, is that he does not get any more books.

It has yet to be noted that there is no arrangement existing, by which anyone desirous of borrowing a book which is already in circulation, may have that book reserved for him on its return; it is solely a chance whether he finds it in the Library when next he inquires.

Finally, it is of special importance to mention that twice every year there is a stock-taking of all the books in the Library. The Libraries, however, are not closed for this purpose, nor are all the books called in, as is the case in most other Public Libraries of England. In Birmingham the stock-taking goes on while the Library is in full working order. Day by day the Librarian initials in the Shelf Catalogue such of the books as are on the shelves at the time. An entry of those not on the shelves is made in another book, and day by day this list is checked by the books returned until, by an exhaustive process, every book has been seen or its absence accounted for. It is true that by this method every stock-taking spreads over well nigh half a year. Both the fact that the books are all present,³

1. In the year 1898-9 there was paid in fines the amount of £862 18s. 2d., of which £283 11s. 2d. was received at the Central Lending Library; that is, for every fourth volume borrowed (in the Central Lending Library for every third volume) was paid 1d. fine.

2. In the case of citizens these notes are, of course, omitted.

3. A loss of 49 books was recorded for the year 1898-9, that is one in every 1,877 books.

and that they are still in good condition, are in this way established, and the officials obtain a very complete knowledge of the Library.

The use of the Lending Libraries is very extensive.¹ During the last year tickets were issued to 16,569 persons. Of these about 1,000, or 6%, were burgesses borrowing on their own guarantee, and 6,548, or 39·5%, women. Of the total number of borrowers between 1st April, 1897, and 31st March, 1899, two-thirds had not passed their 25th year, and more than one-third were of the youthful age from 10 to 14. The number of the readers above 25 years of age gradually decreases with their advancing years, but again increases to some extent after 60. The preponderance of borrowers under 25 explains how it is that between one-quarter and one-fifth of all the readers are scholars and students. Of the borrowers who are occupied in business in various ways, clerks and bookkeepers furnish the largest number; then, considerably fewer, schoolmasters, teachers, etc.; then, in succession, assistants and salesmen; engineers, machinists, fitters, and such like; warehousewomen; errand and office boys; jewellers and goldsmiths; dressmakers and milliners; persons occupied in the brass trade; housekeepers; printers and compositors, and so forth. In the Central Lending Library the borrowing public is composed of all classes; in the Branches it is also very varied. In those Libraries which lie in the business and working men's quarters, such as Adderley Park, Constitution Hill, and Deritend, the public naturally differs from that in the quiet suburbs of Balsall Heath, Harborne, and Small Heath. In Harborne there are one-fifth more women than men readers.

The number of issues during 1898-99 was 913,285, being a daily average of 3,000 volumes, or a turnover of nine times per volume during the year. The largest issues were in January, with an average of 3,216 per day; February, with 3,260; and April, with 3,218; the smallest in July, with 2,600, and in August, with an average of 2,565 per day. The borrowing of popular books is so great that last year 3,178 volumes, or 3·3% of all the books in the Lending Libraries, are reported as being worn out, and, except the 387 volumes referred to on page 23 of this pamphlet, were replaced by new copies. Of the total issue, 71% belongs to Fiction, 13% to the Literature for the Young, 5% to the classes B and D, and 2% and less to the remaining classes. Of class H (books for the Blind), only 192, and of class K (Foreign books), only 152 volumes were borrowed. Thanks both to its situation and to its larger stock of books, the greatest use is made of the Central Lending Library, from which, in 1898-99, 204,980 volumes, or 22% of the total issue, were taken out, being a daily average of 669.² Of the Branches, those most used were not those with the largest stock of books, but the newer Libraries. This is probably due, not only to the situation of those Libraries in populous places, but like-

1. Concerning the use of these Libraries, what has been said in note 1 on page 18 of this pamphlet has to be borne in mind.
2. The greatest number of books issued in one day was 1,560 vols. on March 31st, 1888, and the greatest number on one day last year 1,094.

wise to their inviting exterior and comfortable arrangement. On an average, during 1898-99, each volume was issued 20 times from Balsall Heath, 15 from Small Heath, 13 from Spring Hill, and 12 times from Bloomsbury and Harborne. These are the newest Libraries. At the other Libraries the turnover for the same space of time was: Constitution Hill 8, Gosta Green 7, Central Lending 6, Deritend and Adderley Park only 3.

In conclusion the *News Rooms*, established under the same administration, and under the same roof as the Lending Departments, have still to be discussed. It is, indeed, the larger part of the floor space of all these Libraries that is arranged and furnished as a Reading Room. The walls are adorned with good pictures, large plans of Birmingham and environs, a number of Maps of the Earth, the main divisions of the Earth, the British Isles, the United States of North America, and New South Wales. In the Central Lending Library 300 seats are provided, at Small Heath 120, at Balsall Heath 118, in two of the other Libraries about 80, and in the smallest Room, viz., at Adderley Park, 36. Special tables for ladies are provided in all the Rooms, and for boys in most. The Rooms are supplied with newspapers, most of them fixed on reading stands, so that several people can conveniently read them at the same time. There are also Periodicals, Time Tables, and a small Reference Library accessible to the public. Lists of Parliamentary Voters, Official Lists of Deceased Seamen, Instructions for Emigrants, and other public notices are put up in various places.

The supply of papers for each room is in accordance with its size, and suitable to the majority of the class of people dwelling in the neighbourhood and using the Library. The Birmingham daily and weekly papers, and the most important of the London papers, are accessible in all the Libraries; of those most in demand as many copies being taken as required. In the Central Lending Library the numbers taken are: "Birmingham Daily Mail" 18, "Birmingham Daily Post" 14, "Birmingham Daily Argus" 10, "Birmingham Daily Gazette" 8; "Daily News," "Daily Telegraph," and "Standard," 5 of each; "Birmingham Weekly Post," "Daily Graphic," "Star," "Times," and others 3 copies each. The number of dailies and weeklies of which 2 copies are taken is very large.¹ The advertisement sheets of the Birmingham papers are also cut out, mounted on frames, and hung up in various places. The daily papers are kept for two days, and copies of the same, after they are taken off the tables, are generally kept for a month, so that they may be seen on request. With the exception of those 28 papers referred to on page 9 of this pamphlet, which are preserved in the Reference Library, the illustrated papers, and others if suitable, when they are taken off the tables, which is not done as a rule until the succeeding issue comes, are presented to workhouses, hospitals, and similar institutions, all the other papers being sold as waste paper. The largest selection of

1. On the separate tables are the different papers and journals arranged in a certain order; see note 4 on page 16 of this pamphlet.

newspapers is, of course, in the Reading Room of the Central Lending Library. There can be seen 152 different papers, of which 81=53% are obtained gratis. All the papers appearing in Birmingham, viz., 4 dailies and 10 weeklies, 12 London dailies, 23 from the provinces, 2 from Scotland, 4 from Ireland, the *Journal des Débats*, the *National Zeitung*, 16 English papers from the United States, Canada, Australia, and the Cape, and 76 English papers appearing weekly outside Birmingham, in Great Britain, are displayed for convenient reading in that room. In the same room there are also placed some of the more popular of the journals which are kept in the Reference Library. In addition there are to be found here 83 weekly and 92 monthly journals of all kinds, whereof 100, or 57%, are gifts. Besides these there may be seen 20 different Railway Guides, sent gratis to the Library, and two which are purchased, viz., Bradshaw and the Continental Bradshaw. A Reference Library, accessible to the public, is not put in this room, since that may be used in the Reference Library in the same building. At the Branches the public shelves contain a good selection of reference works, series of periodicals, popular historical, natural science, technical and other books. In order to avoid thefts, small volumes are not placed on these shelves.

The Reading Rooms are open to all from 9 a.m. till 10 p.m., and the attendance is very numerous. In winter and in bad weather they are naturally more visited than in summer, the best attendance being always in the evening, and the next best about dinner time. According to the Report of the Free Libraries Committee, last year the average attendance in the News Rooms was 22,500 daily; 6,500 of these in the Central News Rooms, 2,900 at Constitution Hill, 2,500 at Balsall Heath, and so on to 714 at Harborne, and 130 at Adderley Park. According to this Report about 8 persons per minute had entered the Central News Room. As to this compare the note made on the attendance at the Reference Library. The public is very mixed, as the frequenters of the several Libraries differ according to their respective localities. The daily papers, especially the advertisements, are most read and referred to. It seldom happens that parts are cut out of papers, or entire sheets taken away. Altogether the behaviour of the people in general is excellent, only occasionally a sleeper has to be aroused or a child to be quieted. It is to be noted withal, that in these Rooms there is no special oversight. It suffices that the officials from the Lending Department can overlook the Room. Only in the Central Lending Library, where such a survey is not possible, there is as a rule one of the Porters in the Reading Room. Besides this a Policeman on duty walks from time to time through the Rooms.

The life of the Libraries, as seen in the Central Lending Library and News Room, so important in size, endowment of books, and extensive use, cannot be depicted more clearly than was done fifteen years ago by the worthy Chief Librarian, J. D. Mullins, a picture which, in the main, is true even to this day.¹

1. Birmingham News Rooms, by J. D. Mullins, *The Birmingham Daily Mail*, February 22nd, 1884. Reprinted in *The Library Chronicle* Vol. I., 1884, pp. 37-39, and in *The Library Journal*, Vol. IX., 1884, pp. 101-102.

All things considered, the Lending Libraries and News Rooms stand worthily beside the Reference Library. Their store and equipment are excellent, their administration good, access very easy, and their use therefore so considerable that the abundance of benefit which they confer, even though that be not recognizable to the observer from the outside, and cannot be proved by figures or demonstrated by facts, yet most certainly is exceedingly great.

* * *

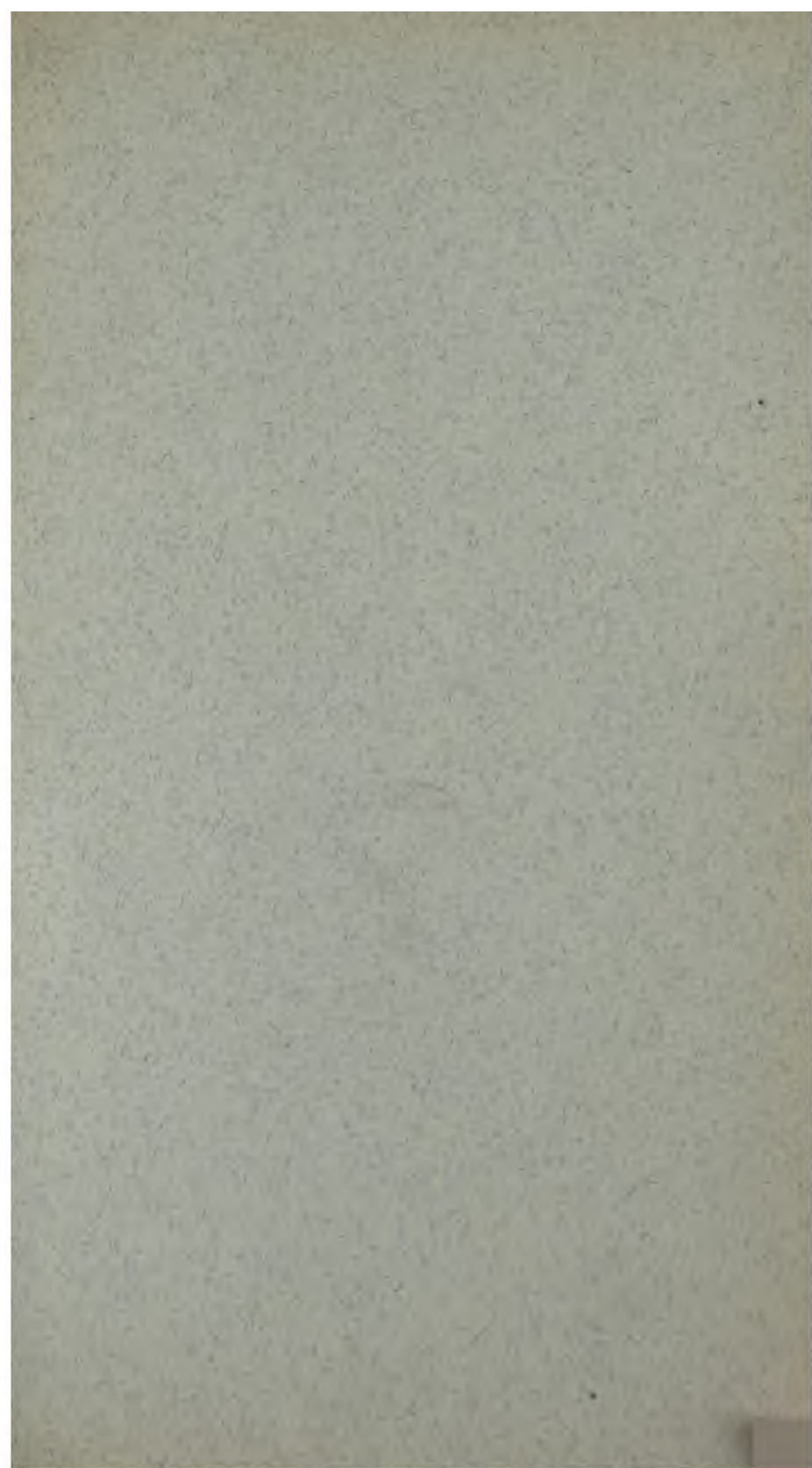
Specially worthy of praise and admiration is the excellently ordered, smooth business management, never suffering any arrears whatever. This is secured by the most minute inspection and surveillance. Two members of the Visiting Committee, mentioned at the beginning, inspect every one of the Libraries once during each month. The work done in the Reference Library is daily examined by the Chief Librarian; he, too, visits the other Libraries. Moreover, the Lending Libraries receive one visit per week from the Inspector, at stated times, and one or two surprise visits. Each Librarian has in the evening to give, in the Work Book, an account of his day's work, and to write down for the next day a list of the work for each individual assistant. In the Time Book each official has to mark the hours of his coming and leaving. In the Routine Book all regular duties, down to the very minutest, are certified by the officials concerned as having been duly performed; for example, the Routine Book in the Reference Library mentions, as duties daily to be done, 110 items for the officials, 22 for the cleaners, and 41 for the porters. The greatest control, however, over the entire administration is exercised by the public. The public express unreservedly their wishes and their grievances, and generally they claim for this purpose the columns of the most read local newspapers, in which letters and replies often are continued for several days concerning the merest trifles.

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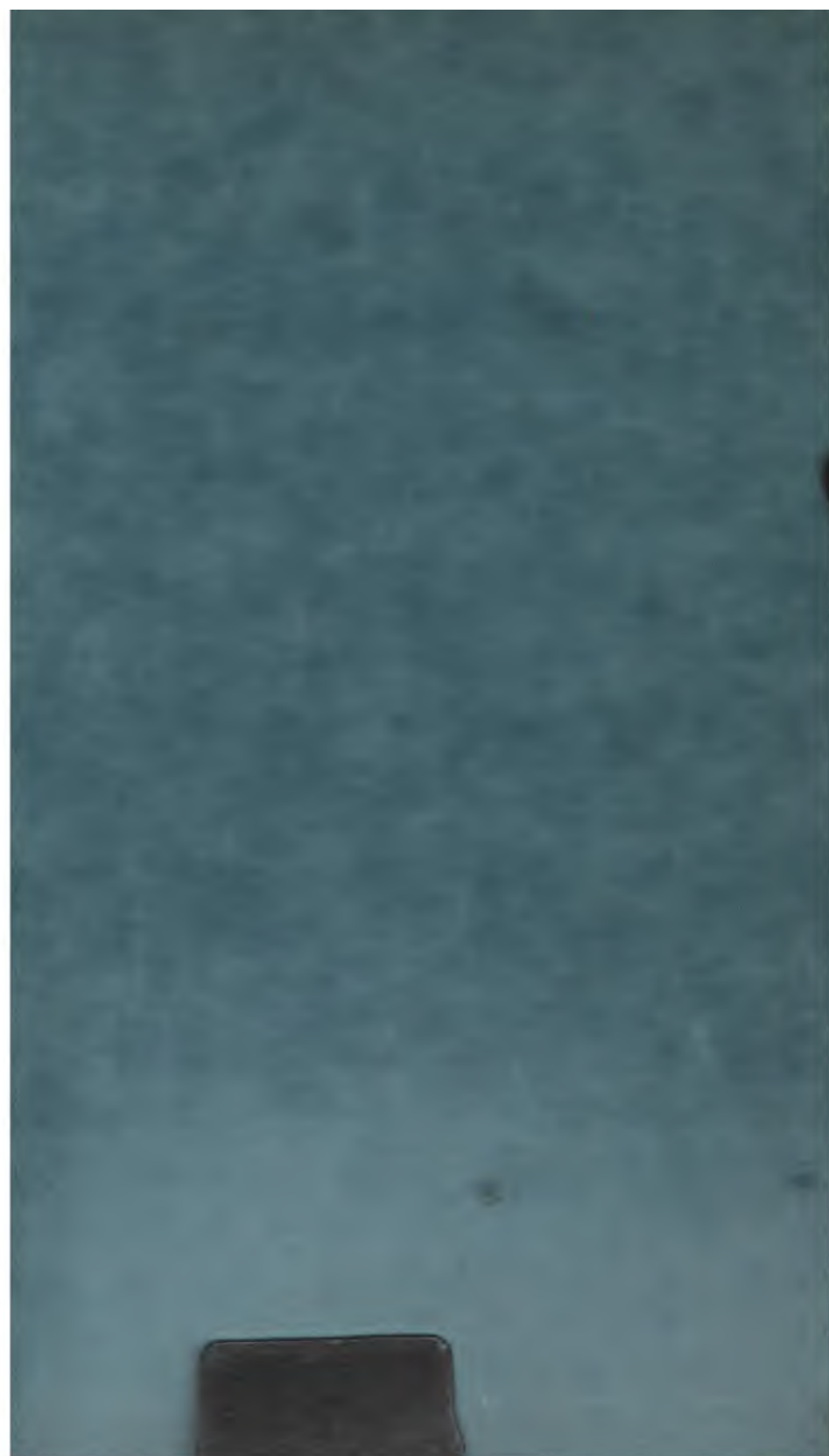
The description, as here given, of the institution and activity of the Birmingham Free Libraries will prove the opinion concerning them (as expressed at the beginning of this pamphlet) to be correct. The Corporation, being convinced of the usefulness of the Libraries, have granted the means requisite for obtaining the end which had been clearly recognised as desirable. Thus, collections of books have been brought together which satisfy even the most extensive requirements of the population. Reading Rooms have been provided and furnished, wherein may be found information concerning all questions of the day and all relationships of life; and all this can be used with that comfort and ease which, in greater or lesser degree, distinguish all the Public Libraries of Great Britain.

POSTSCRIPT.

The number of volumes, according to kindly communication, amounted on March 31st, 1900, in the Reference Library to 147,843, and in the Lending Libraries to 102,637 volumes.







B 8682.1.40
The Birmingham Free libraries,
Widener Library 007041583



3 2044 080 332 430